

# STUCKEDNESS

---

## On the Organizational Art of Forbearance

By

Kalpana Vignehsa

This thesis is submitted to the

University of Technology Sydney

On

24 July 2014

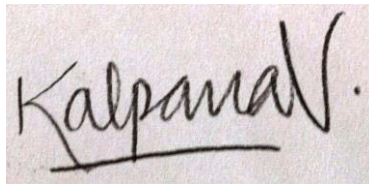
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

## **CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kalpana V.", written on a light-colored background.

Date: 24 July 2014

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first thank you is unreservedly for Mitchell Smith. Without your loving support I would not have started, let alone gotten through some of the more exacting parts of this PhD. You are an uncommon friend and champion, thank you.

Without understating the deep intellectual gifts they have all shared with me, my supervisors have each brought a catalogue of unique strengths to this doctoral endeavour. Emmanuel Josserand, Siggi Gudergan, and Tyrone Pitsis, thank you for having been generous with your time at various points of my candidature. Shankar Sankaran, I am deeply thankful for your caring nature and unrelenting support. Last but not least, Stewart Clegg, you helped me, first to imagine how a political scientist might *be* at a business school, and second, you engaged with my work thoroughly and swiftly. Thank you for embodying your name and being the steward to my scholar.

This work has been financially supported, partially, by both the Australian Research Council and Helmsman International, Sydney. I extend my sincere gratitude to both parties, as well as, to all the generous people who let me invade their space as I conducted my ethnography. You gave of your space and time, over many months, innumerable coffee and lunch breaks, and even some martinis. I learnt much because you let me in, and this story is a reminder, of things I want to learn more of.

I am thankful for the consistent and tireless affection that I got from my dispersed but core support crew during these last months. Thank you beautiful Katherine Williams for being ‘Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close’ and a patchwork heroine. Julia Nalivaiko, thank you for your loving me, loving good food, and consistently making me laugh out loud. Michele Lancione, thank you for talking me out of analytical circles and our rituals that I now miss. Karen Smits, thank you for cheering me on, being a sounding board, and showering me with that bubbly love of yours. Puja Varaprasad and Sangeetha Kumar, thank you for the love, and all the times you said ‘*Jia You!*’ Rekha Piramanayagam, thank you for our regular breakfast breaks; they could have always gone on for hours if I hadn’t needed to “get back to my thesis!” Ramu Rajendran, with our York-Sydney synchronised sleep cycles and emoji overdoses, you have been a buddy par excellence.

A PhD feels like it gets written in the last few months, but in reality, it is a much longer project, with numerous people who made the journey enjoyable. In Sydney, a towering thank you (so it reaches!) goes to Chris Biesenthal for 4 years of pod camaraderie and for singing with me. My network of support at the office: Daphne Freeder, Ralf Wilden, Chelsea Wise, Katrin Akpolat, Veronica Alcorta, Liisa Naar, Jenny Edwards, Judy Johnston, Paul Brown, Krithika Randhawa, Ace Simpson, Anjana Anandakumar, Tim Devinney, Jochen Schweitzer, Ingo Bentrött, and Ryan Tang - thank you for your encouragement, commiseration, and chocolate! Also, thank you to Elizabeth Ng and Olivia Young for your assistance with the submission process. Much love and gratitude to the rest of my Sydney friends, but especially to Sarah Hass, Uri Schlafrig, Kate Weatherby, Martin Stradling, Riaz Lalla, Stef CPS Mohr, Sylvia Huang, Leo Mignoli, and Rosemary Hammerton.

I am thankful to my reliable and loving family in Singapore: my sister, Shadhana, Aunty Souki, Uncle Prabha, Sathiya, and Pushpa, as well as the network of biological and non-biological cousins, aunties, and uncles. Debbie Soon, Eesvan Krishnan, and Arjuna Nagendran: you each deserve a special mention for providing invaluable assistance when I was writing my candidature assessment from Singapore in 2011. I especially want to thank my mother. Amma, thank you for your unconditional love, for helping me remember Appa, and for believing in me, even when you disagree with me!

Finally, Matthew, *mi amor*, thank you for being there for me, looking after me in my toughest moments, and in doing so, making me feel so happy to share my best times with you too.

If I have forgotten to mention your kindness, please forgive me. I hope you enjoy what follows and thank you for journeying with me. Any errors you come across however, are of course, mine alone.

Kalpana Vignehsa  
Sydney, July 2014

In Memory of my Father, Vignehsa Ponnampalam

~ 10 years of loving, 20 years of missing, 30 years and growing ~

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of Figures &amp; Tables .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations &amp; Acronyms .....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Diagram of Agencies in the Field.....</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>List of Actors-in-Agencies in the Field.....</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>1.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Literature on ‘Being Stuck’ .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Navigating this Tale of Stuckedness .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Part II – Problematizing Stuckedness .....	7
Part III – Reflections on a Performance .....	10
Part IV – Reportage & Analysis.....	11
Part V - Denouement.....	15
<b>2 .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Stuckedness &amp; Its Discontents.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>A Short History of Hage’s Idea.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>The Immanence of Moving Well: “The state of my being is walking” .....</b>	<b>23</b>
The Compulsion to be Mobile.....	25
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Governmentality .....</b>	<b>28</b>
The Career of the Concept.....	29
Foucault’s Shifting Conception of Power.....	30
The Autonomous Individual .....	32
<b>To Conclude .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>3 .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Processing Governmentality.....</b>	<b>40</b>

<b>States of Being/Being .....</b>	<b>40</b>
Specificity .....	44
Rationality .....	48
End of Politics?.....	52
<b>To Conclude .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>4 .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Translating Foucault .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Discourse: Archaeologies to Genealogies.....</b>	<b>61</b>
Statements, Rules & Formations .....	62
Locating the Social: Relevant Debates .....	63
<b>Discourse as Practice .....</b>	<b>65</b>
Materiality .....	66
<i>Pouvoir/Savoir</i> .....	72
The Idea of ‘The Subject’ .....	86
<b>To Conclude .....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>5 .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Genealogical Ethnography.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>A Genealogical Ethnography of Organizing .....</b>	<b>97</b>
“Doing” Genealogical Ethnography.....	99
<b>Gaining Access to an Organizing Apparatus .....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>Navigating IntelliTech .....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Methodological Tools .....</b>	<b>124</b>
Shadowing.....	124
Artefacts & Things .....	127
<b>Analysis &amp; Textwork.....</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Ethical Issues.....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>To Conclude &amp; Cohere .....</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>6 .....</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>Interlude .....</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>7 .....</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Stuckedness in Wax: Heroes and Villains.....</b>	<b>142</b>

<b>Background Notes.....</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Meetings with the Department of Goldfish (DOG) .....</b>	<b>144</b>
Coping is Materially Negotiated.....	145
Metaphors: Starting with a Goldfish .....	147
The Clash of Misaligned Strategies .....	149
Metaphors & Stories Continued .....	151
The Inefficacy Feels Like War Metaphor .....	152
Misaligned Strategies Continued .....	155
Going Offline.....	157
<b>Discussion: Problematizing the Why.....</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>8 .....</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>Stuckedness in Wane: “Making Shit Happen” .....</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>Performances of Waning Stuckedness.....</b>	<b>167</b>
A Bridging Act.....	167
Passionate Project Professionals .....	177
<b>Discussion: Problematizing the Why.....</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>9 .....</b>	<b>196</b>
<b>Related Domains of Stuckedness .....</b>	<b>196</b>
<b>Climate Change Politics.....</b>	<b>198</b>
Problematizing the Why .....	202
<b>The Corporatized Public Sector &amp; Energy Reform .....</b>	<b>205</b>
Problematizing the Why .....	209
<b>Gender Intersecting.....</b>	<b>213</b>
1. “Don’t Say a Word, If You Want To Keep Your Job” .....	217
2. “Jackson’s Little Hairdresser Trio” .....	219
Problematizing the Why .....	221
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>10.....</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>Original Contributions .....</b>	<b>229</b>
Re-conceptualising Stuckedness .....	230
Practices of Stuckedness.....	233



<b>Contribution to Academic Debates.....</b>	<b>238</b>
Governmentality & Method.....	238
Practice on a Project .....	241
<b>Contribution to Practice.....</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>Ideas for Future Research.....</b>	<b>245</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>247</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES

Figure 1: The queue for dinner at mamak, a beloved restaurant in sydney.....	21
Figure 2: The Eyjafjallajökull ash cloud (Gauti 2010).....	26
Figure 3: Airline passengers awaiting information about flight cancellations due to Eyjafjallajökull eruption (Dennis 2010) .....	27
Figure 4: Artwork from the 1967 referendum campaign to include aborigines in the australian census (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 1967). .....	73
Figure 5: M. C. Escher's (1948) <i>Drawing Hands</i> .....	84
Figure 6: Diagram of various agencies encountered in field. ....	120

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

**CEO** – Chief Executive Officer

**CTO** – Chief Technology Officer

**DOG** – Department of Goldfish

**GridLock** – Energy company that won tender to run trial for Australian Government

**ICT** – Information & Communication Technology

**IntelliTech** – Unit set up by GridLock and the Australian Government to implement the trial

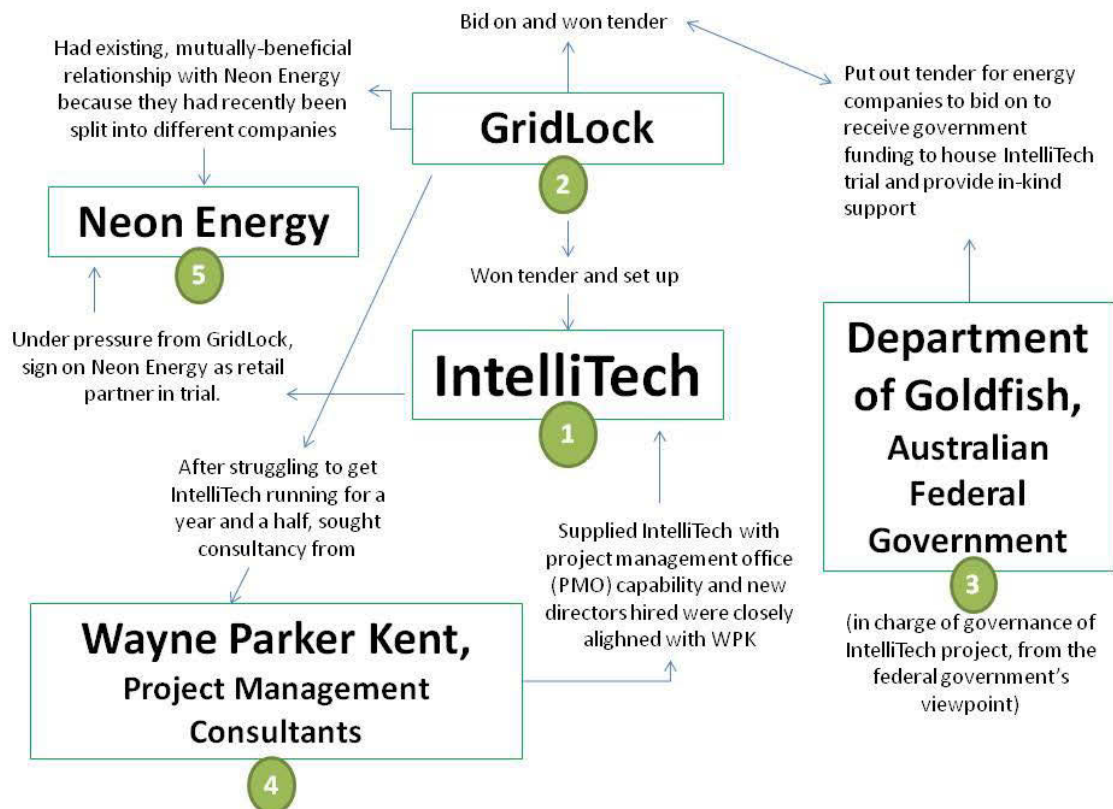
**PM** – Project Manager

**SLM** – Stream Lead Meeting

**WBS** – Work Breakdown Structure

**WPK** – Wayne Parker Kent

## DIAGRAM OF AGENCIES IN THE FIELD



## LIST OF ACTORS-IN-AGENCIES IN THE FIELD

<b>1 IntelliTech</b>	<b>2 GridLock</b>	<b>3 DOG</b>	<b>4 WPK</b>	<b>5 Neon Energy</b>
Jackson Hunt (Program Director)	Don Henshall (Chief Executive Officer)	Kent Heller (Senior Bureaucrat)	Henry Loy (Director)	Fred Billing (Head of Neon Energy)
Peter Lewis (Line Manager of IntelliTech, reports to GridLock CTO)	Charles Leidner (Chief Technology Officer and Peter's boss)	Clare Ungerson (Kent's right- hand person)	Steven Naiset (Managing Director)	
Greg Benson (Program Manager)	Toby Shaw (Executive General Manager)	Mike Acker (Graduate role in Kent's team)	Oliver Varsa (Consultant and Head of PMO at IntelliTech)	
Kate Fiske (Admin Support)	Kylie (Communications Specialist)	Bryce Ho (Minister)	Michelle Fischer (Consultant, IntelliTech PMO)	
Sara Evans (Admin Support)	David (Communications Specialist prior to Kylie)		Pradeep Ryan (Consultant, IntelliTech PMO)	
Zilla Hearn (Peter's Personal Assistant)	Gillian Henley (Executive General Manager)			
Adam Green (Program Manager)	Jack Finter (Executive General Manager)			
Paul Elling (Program Manager)	Dennis Pateman (Executive General Manager)			→ Connections to Neon
Graeme Whitley (Finance Manager)	Peta Wilson (Executive General Manager)			
Owen Neil (Program Manager)	Vander Russell (Executive General Manager)			
Malcolm Vinski (Program Manager)	Lawrence Mitchell (ex-Program Manager at IntelliTech)			
Keith Langan (Project Manager, works with Adam)	Damian Pleck (GridLock Engineer and PhD Student)			
	George Ardant (one of 2 full-time GridLock employees (as opposed to contractors) on the IntelliTech project)			
	Rita Langan (Executive General Manager)			

## ABSTRACT

Stuckedness can be described as the taken-for-granted advocacy of the continuance with a practice even when such a performance is counter-productive, not fruitful, or non-generative. Indeed, most people will be familiar with experiences of stuckedness as such practices are to be found in acts such as the staunch dismissal of the issue of climate change despite evidence to the contrary, the repeated choice to stay in toxic relationships, the careless pursuit of profit by corporations, the choice to persist with a habit that is likely to result in degenerative disease, etc. It is also likely that most people will at some point become acquainted with feelings of chagrin towards such practices. Yet, the characterization of practices of tacit forbearance as stuckedness remains largely unproblematized and this thesis seeks to understand how and why a social practice reveals itself as stuckedness.

Drawing on the work of Foucault, and then using genealogical and ethnographic methods, namely the techniques of action nets, a reporting style, and problematized confessional tales, I excavate how and why certain elements come together to be problematized by my respondents in those terms which had become for me an index of stuckedness.

This research draws on data from the specific spatio-temporal field of a costly government-funded innovation trial within the energy sector, operating within a continuously complex environment. Focusing on expressions of taken-for-granted advocacy of recursive self-control or unchanging replication, I make connections between different observable elements (power/knowledge relations, historical and cultural conditions, human and non-human agencies, and the practices under scrutiny) to detail and problematize the justification and utility on which the endurance of practices of stuckedness depends.